

THE EYES OF FAITH

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NO PERSON can be a Christian who is unwilling to be accounted peculiar.

Popularity, the praise of men, the worship and support of the majority, political power, and all those things which contribute to world distinction, can never be realized in the experience of a Christian or of the Christian church. However contrary this may be to appearances which the Christian world presents, it is the truth, declared and upheld by the word which cannot be broken.

Everyone who would be a Christian, therefore, may expect at the start to part with all those things which are to be reaped from the treasure fields of the world. He may expect that his career will be counted anything but successful from a worldly point of view. He may expect to identify himself with a company of people who are humble, few in number, and looked down upon by the majority with scorn and derision. He may expect that his whole life will be one of self-denial,—of turning away from those pleasures and repeated benefits for which the human heart naturally longs.

It is wise for such an one to sit down at the outset and count the costs. There are, as we are told in one of Christ's parables, a certain class of persons who, when they hear the word of God, at first receive it joyfully, but soon, under the pressure of difficulties and persecutions, become offended and turned back to the world. Matt. 13:20, 21. They start out apparently with no thought but that the way is smooth and easy through to the end; but when it becomes rough and difficult their courage fails them. They have not counted the cost. And no man, said Christ, who puts his hand to the plough and then turns back, is worthy of the kingdom of God.

It is as true today as it ever was in the past, that the way to life is strait, and is travelled by but few. It is as true today as it was in the days of Paul, that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22. Whatever occasion the present age may be furnishing for boasting, it has not progressed beyond other ages in smoothing the pathway of the pilgrim to Mount Zion. The devil hates Christians today as much as he did in the days of Huss and Ridley and Latimer, and his power over men in general has become no less. There are martyrs today, as there were martyrs then. It is

true now, as it ever was, that “all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

To count the cost we must see with the eye of faith; otherwise our choice will be made without any just conception of the interest which it involves. Only with the eye of faith can we see those spiritual things which balance up the scale of the world’s prizes and pleasures. Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. 2:14. The choice that is made with the natural eye will always be the wrong one, because the natural eye can see only the things that are earthly and temporal. But the eye of faith can see the “far more exceedingly eternal weight of glory.” By faith—which is belief of the word of God—we understand that the path to eternal life leads in this world through tribulation; but knowing this, we do not hesitate to choose that path, because we also know that in comparison with the glorious and eternal things to come, all these are light afflictions, which are but for a moment. 2 Cor. 4:17. And we are able to see that even in this present world the Christian pathway is full of light and joy, and that it is better “to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Heb. 11:25.

If therefore we have come to a point where the voice of conscience and duty bids us to take a course that will separate us from all worldly honor and popularity and that which commands the attention of the world, and identify ourselves with those who are few and despised, whom the world reckons to be either great or wise, we need not think that conscience is at fault or that we have been called to do some strange thing different from that which the followers of Christ have been called to do in the past. “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,” but chose to identify himself with a nation of slaves, “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” Heb. 11:24, 26. It has been the same choice that has been made by God’s children all the way through. It is not a more difficult one that you are called to make today. And by the eye of faith you will be enabled to esteem the choice a wise one. For placing ourselves on the side of God, we are on the side of the majority, on the side of wealth and honor that never end, of happiness in life eternal, and of “a crown of glory, that fadeth not away.” 1 Peter 5:4.

THE Christian sees with the eye of faith. Faith is the only means through which we obtain a knowledge of the things to which Christianity pertains. By faith we have received all that we know of

the life to come. By faith we look back to the time before man was, and “understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.” Heb. 11:3. By faith also we understand truths of the highest importance pertaining to the present life. By the eye of faith we are enabled to guide our feet in the narrow path that leads by many snares and pitfalls to an eternity of joy and peace.

Faith sees that which is not cognizable to the natural senses. “Faith,” we are told in Heb. 11:1, “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” But faith does more than simply see that which the natural senses cannot perceive, it contradicts the evidence of the senses. It refuses to see that which the senses claim to perceive. And this is where faith is especially valuable, for if we allowed ourselves always to believe the evidence of our senses, we should wander quickly and hopelessly away from the path which leads to God.

One of our senses,—feeling, for instance, that inner feeling which is of the mind and heart—says, I do not see any happiness in the way, or any eternal weight of glory at the end of it; but faith says, It is there! Again, feeling says (and perhaps reason backs it up), I see great difficulty in the way; but faith says, It is not there; what you saw was only an appearance, not a reality. Faith deals only with realities. They may be invisible to us now, but they are no less tangible. That which seems so awfully real to us now, is described by Paul as the “light affliction, which is but for a moment”; the invisible glory beyond is an “eternal weight.” 2 Cor. 4:17.

Perhaps you see before you—or seem to see—a great list of very grievous sins that have darkened your past life. You have repented of and confessed them, but the devil comes and holds them up before you and says, There are your sins; do you not see them? You are too wicked a person for the Lord to save. But faith says, They are *not* there. And why? Because it quotes to you these words of God Himself, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all of righteousness.” 1 John 1:9. And when God forgives sins, He removes them from us, “as far as the east is from the west.”

The very fact that the devil tries to discourage you with a long and vivid array of your past sins that you have confessed, is reason for encouragement, because the devil never brings to a person’s mind sins that are not confessed and pardoned. His work is to keep people in ignorance of their sin; but as soon as they are seen and confessed,

and God has removed them according to His word, the devil holds them all up and tells the individual they are still there, in order to make him discouraged. He is as persistent in bringing such sins to the Christian's mind and keeping them before him, as he was before in keeping them in the background.

But faith says, "as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Ps. 103:12. And thus we are enabled to know the *truth* on this vital point; for faith always speaks by the word of God; and His word is truth. Rom. 10:17; John 17:17.

Where feeling sees mountains, faith sees only molehills. Where faith sees only the arm of flesh, faith sees only the arm of God. Where the wisdom of man sees foolishness, faith sees the wisdom of God. Where feeling and reason see nothing but defeat, faith sees eternal victory. Where feeling and reason see only death, faith sees everlasting life. It makes all the difference in the world whether we share our course in accordance with the evidence of the one, or the other.

Faith sees nothing but truth. More than this; it sees nothing but that which is worth seeing. Paul said to his Philippian brethren, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Phil. 4:8. These are just the things that faith sees. So long as we direct our steps by the eye of faith, we shall walk in the paths of righteousness, but when we cease to walk by faith and begin to walk by sight, or by reason, or by feeling, we begin to go wrong, because we are guided by appearances and not by truth.

Moses at the Court of Pharaoh, and Joseph and the house of Potiphar, walked by the eye of faith and thus kept themselves from paths that were false and evil. We are told that Moses "endured as seeing Him who is invisible"; and we may be sure that Joseph, surrounded by the licentiousness and idolatry of Egypt, walked in the midst of them as one who saw them not. And so it is with the Christian of today. He is not influenced by that which he does not see. Though he may see evil and wickedness with his natural eyes, and feel the promptings of evil in his own heart, he *walks* by faith, which sees only his Saviour and the pardoning blood of Calvary, and the things of the kingdom of God.

The Christian must walk by faith, and faith alone. He will not be safe in making the least departure from the path that faith marks out, or in substituting any other source of knowledge for it, for all other sources of our knowledge are liable to be fallacious and misleading. And the devil can mislead a man every time when he can get him to substitute reason or feeling or something else, for faith. The devil surrounds his deceptions with very plausible appearances of truth. Notice how it was that he deceived our first parents. He appeared to Eve in the form of a serpent; and as she beheld him he was among the branches of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, eating of its fruit. As she came near the serpent spoke to her. She was surprised to hear a serpent speak, for she knew God had not given it the gift of speech. Then the serpent told her that the fruit of the tree of knowledge would not cause her to die, but would open her eyes and make her like a god; for see, he said, I have eaten of the fruit and it has not hurt me; and more than that, it has given me the power of speech! This, when we come to consider it, was really an overmastering deception. Her eyes, her ears, her reason, all testified to the truth of what the serpent said. Ah, had she then been guided by faith, and not by these, she would have known the truth, and the history of the world would have been deferred. Faith would have said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." This was the truth, and all the specious appearances before her were entirely false.

The devil has lost none of his cunning since he tempted Eve. He has worked continually upon men's feelings, upon their reason, upon all their natural senses, to get them to discredit the word of God. If he can do this He can deceive them every time. But if we will cling to the word of God, if we will have faith in it in spite of all appearances, however plausible, that contradict the word, we shall escape the deceptions of the devil, and keep our feet in the straight path that leads to eternal joy.

FAITH is the foundation of all knowledge. Without the principle of faith nobody could ever learn anything. There are men who do a great deal of what is called original investigation; but all of their attainments depend on certain fundamental truths that they learned in their childhood, and which they learned in the same way that the tradesman's clerk learned the same things. They first learned to read. To this end they had to learn the letters of the alphabet. For a knowledge of the alphabet they were dependent on the word of some

other person. Their teachers pointed to certain letters and words, pronounced in the names, and the future scientist repeated them until they were fixed in their memories.

The learning of the alphabet is purely a matter of faith. The child does not ask the teacher to prove to him that the letters bear the names that they are said to bear, and the teacher could not do so if he were asked. The teacher himself learned them by faith in somebody's word. In the process of time men have always found that they were correctly taught, provided they accepted the teaching, for the letters have never failed them. There is nothing that men are more absolutely sure of than they are of their "A, B, C," yet there is nothing which is less possible of abstract demonstration. And these open up all the treasures of human wisdom and knowledge.

And there is no difference among men in the way in which they learn. The most confirmed skeptic had to learn in the same way that the Christian scholar did. Not only so, but the learning of the alphabet proves that the principle of faith is common to all men, and is the same in all. It is more difficult for some people to perceive a thing than it is for others; and it takes some people very much longer to fix a fact in their memories than it does others; but when it comes to believing, it is just as natural for one person to believe as it is for another. Since men are to be saved by faith, God has endowed all men by nature with the same principle of faith, so that one shall not have any greater disadvantage in the way of salvation than another.

To show that this is so, we have only to use the illustration of learning the alphabet. It is just as easy for the child of the infidel to believe that "A" is "A" as it is for the child of the Christian. It may be more difficult for one to remember the fact than it is for the other (though the difficulty is as apt to be on the part of the believer's child as of the child of the skeptic); but one can believe the statement as easily as the other can. So that in the matter of faith all men are by nature on a level.

Now to believe on Christ, and to know for a certainty all the truths of His Word, requires only the same principle of faith that is required in the teaching of the alphabet. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. That is, He is the alphabet of God, who is the Source of all knowledge. As the alphabet forms words, so Christ is the Word of God. As from the various combinations of letters and words, all the treasures of human wisdom and knowledge are preserved, so in Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge of God. He is

the wisdom of God. Skeptics may scoff at the Christian faith in Christ, and in His word, but he is as sure of his knowledge as he is of the letters of the alphabet.

Faith gives knowledge only of things that are so. In fact, no one can ever *know* a thing that is not so, anymore than he can actually see a thing that does not exist. So a person cannot have faith in that which is not true. Faith has to do only with absolute truths. The belief that men have in that which is not a fact is superstition or speculation, but not faith. They do not really *know* those things, no matter how positive they may be in their assertions about them. There is always a doubt in their own minds, and often their very positiveness arises from a desire to stifle that doubt.

This is also seen in the impatience of contradiction that is exhibited by those who are in error, while he who has the truth can be perfectly calm while that truth is being derided. Truth never persecutes. Persecution is the protest of error against the contradiction that tends to disturb its own self-confidence. Truth, resting on the eternal rock, and conscious that no contradiction or arguments can ever shake her, is perfectly calm in the midst of opposition. It's only feeling in the midst of persecution is one of sorrow and pity for those who are in their madness beating themselves against the rock.

The Word of God tells us that the worlds were framed by the word of God; that they were spoken into existence in the beginning. Where there was nothing but empty space, there by the word of God were the worlds. It also tells us that the earth was created in created with everything useful and beautiful in six days. The Word of God is the truth, and as we accept the statements concerning creation we know them to be facts. The child who reads the Bible with reverent faith has a much more positive knowledge of the way and time in which the earth was created than the skeptical philosopher has.

But why was the account of creation recorded? Was it merely that we might have our curiosity gratified? Note; "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." Rom. 15:4. Let us see if we can learn the lesson of hope that the story of creation has for us.

THE power of the word of God is best appreciated when we consider the work of creation. In Ps. 33:6-9 we read: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap; He

layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”

From this it is plain to be seen that the entire material of the earth and all that is in it, sprung from the word of God. We cannot comprehend the power of Divinity, but we can see from what is plainly declared, that the word of the Lord is not empty air, but that it is real substance. It is as though the world existed in the word, before it became in the shape in which it now is. When God’s word was uttered, then there was the earth and the heavens.

When the word of God names a thing, then that thing named is formed. Whatever is described by the word, exists in that word. Thus it is impossible for God to lie, for His word makes the thing so. So we read in Rom. 4:17 that God “calleth those things that be not as though they were.” That is something that can be done by God alone. It is true that men sometimes undertake it, but their word does not make the thing so. When a man speaks of a thing that is not as though it were, there is only one word that can be used to describe his action. It is a lie. But God cannot lie, yet He speaks of those things that be not as though they were. For instance, God speaks of a thing that has no existence. He calls it by name, as though it were well known. The instant that His word goes forth, that instant a thing exists.

Consider well the statement of the Psalmist. “He spake and it was.” Not that He spake, and after that it was performed, as a superficial reading of the texts might lead one to think. That idea would not be gained if the translators had not inserted the word “done,” in italics. It is true that it was done then, but it was the word of the Lord that did it. The idea would be better conveyed by rendering the passage literally, as we have, “He spake, and it was.” As soon as He spake, there everything stood. Whatever God’s word says, *is*, because His word conveys the thing.

This is why in prophecy things are often spoken of as already done. He speaks of those things that be not as though they were already done, not, as is sometimes said, because in His purpose they exist, but because they exist in His word. They are as freely in existence as they can ever be, although they do not yet appear to human sight.

It is for this reason that the word of the Lord is strength and comfort to those who believe in it; for the word which is written in the Bible is the word of God, the same as that which created the heavens and the

earth. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." That is, it is, "God breathed." Now remember that "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." The breath of God, which has creative energy in it, is that which gives us the precepts and promises of the Bible.

That creative word is the power of the Gospel. For the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth; and the power of God *is* revealed in the things that are made. See Rom. 1:16, 20. The power of redemption is the power of creation, for redemption is creation. Thus, the Psalmist prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Ps. 51:10. The apostle Paul says that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." 2 Cor. 5:17.

What is this new creation that is wrought in the Gospel? It is righteousness, for the same apostle exhorted us to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. 4:24. Righteousness means good works, and therefore the apostle says that "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained (or prepared) that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10.

The word of the Lord is right. He speaks righteousness. So just as He spoke to emptiness and there the earth was, so He speaks to the soul that is destitute of righteousness, and if that word is received, the righteousness of that word is upon that man. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed, through the forbearance of God." Rom. 3:23-25. To declare is to speak; and so when God declares His righteousness in Christ for the remission of sins, righteousness is spoken into and upon that man, to take the place of his sins, which are taken away. And it is not simply a passive righteousness that is thus declared upon the man, but a real, active righteousness, for the word of the Lord is alive, and God's righteousness is real and active.

This, in brief, is what the story of creation means to those who believe it. Satan would fain have men think that it is only a poem (as though a poem could not be true), or only a fiction gotten up to amuse people. This is the means which he has taken in these days to undermine the Gospel. If man once looks lightly upon creation, the force of the Gospel is weakened for them. Satan is even content that

men should call redemption a greater work than that of creation, for thereby they are not in the least exalting the work of redemption, but depreciating it. Redemption and creation are the same work, and redemption is exalted only as creation is greatly appreciated. It will occur to some that since this is the case, that which commemorates redemption must also commemorate creation. This is true, but of that we shall speak at another time.